



Michigan Association
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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE COORDINATING AGENCIES

POSITION STATEMENT ON HB 5223/ DRUG TESTING FOR FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM APPLICANTS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kristie Schmiede, and I am an administrator with the Genesee County Community Mental Health Agency. This morning I am testifying as President of the Michigan Association of Substance Abuse Coordinating Agencies, known commonly as MASACA. MASACA is comprised of the Directors of the 16 local Coordinating Agencies statutorily responsible for planning, funding and managing substance use disorder services in all 83 Michigan counties.

MASACA is opposed to HB 5223, which proposes to amend 1939 PA280 entitled "The social welfare act."

As currently written, HB 5223 refuses Family Independence Program assistance benefits to applicants and their families if the applicant is found to have the health condition of substance abuse or dependence that is not in remission at the time of the application. HB 5223 does not apply sanctions to any other recognized chronic disease. There is here an opportunity to use legislation to assist individuals with an untreated or unstable chronic health condition to achieve a greater degree of health and wellness. The current bill, while beginning the process of identifying the presence of addiction, falls short of moving the individuals toward wellness and, conversely, penalizes the individual and her/his family for the disorder, rather than intervening to address the identified health condition of abuse or dependence.

Substance use disorders are a diagnosable and treatable illness, recognized as such for decades by every health organization in this country and world-wide. These disorders share many features with other chronic illnesses, such as type II diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease, including a tendency to run in families, an onset and course of development that is influenced by environmental conditions and behavior, as well as the ability to respond to appropriate treatment, which may include long-term life style changes. In recent years, as science has helped us understand this brain disorder much more clearly, treatment professionals have developed far more effective clinical interventions to address this chronic condition. Similar to other chronic illnesses, we can help people with substance use disorders achieve sobriety and adopt a healthy life style with appropriate supports that maintain long term sobriety.